West Virginia Executive Branch
Privacy Tip of the Week

Privacy-Savvy Grown-Ups, Privacy Savvy Kids

Question:

I often call on my son and his friends to help me with technology issues with my iPhone, iPad and computer. They seem to know how to fix anything I've messed up (which can be a lot!) Although they're good at fixing my mistakes, they seem totally uninformed about privacy on sites like Facebook and Myspace. Any suggestions to help them stay safe on the internet?

Answer:

Every adult knows that kids today are very cyber-savvy. They embrace technology, communications, social media and Web 2.0 in ways that we can barely imagine.   These technologies are essential for our children's development, education and participation in the modern, global, interconnected world. But even the most cyber-savvy youth may not fully understand the privacy and security consequences of our rapidly-changing digital environment.

As grown-ups, we have to talk with kids about all kinds of hard issues: dating, sex, drugs, money, and even privacy. But many adults find it really hard to talk about online privacy because they don't even understand the technologies their kids are using! The good news is that resources exist to help you!

Here are some good resources that parents, teachers, and others who work with children can use to learn how to talk about online privacy and security to teens, tweens and children.   These sites can provide you with a wealth of information about the technologies the kids are using – including how to decipher instant messaging ("IM") code – the risks that they may face – including cyberbullying and sexting, and how to guide them to make wise choices about online privacy.

Wired Safety: http://www.wiredsafety.org/
Wired Safety's Stop Cyberbullying Site: http://www.stopcyberbullying.com/
Federal Trade Commission Children's Privacy Pages:
http://www.ftc.gov/privacy/privacyinitiatives/childrens_educ.html
Privacy Rights Clearinghouse: http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs21-children.htm